

## Wearing a Mouthguard

A mouthguard can help protect your teeth from damage due to grinding. Because many people need to wear one at night, a mouthguard is sometimes called a night guard. The guard is plastic and often custom made. It may fit over your top or bottom teeth. Wear it exactly as your dentist instructs. Also, be sure to care for your mouthguard properly.



## Mouthguard Care

- Rinse the guard before wearing and after removing it from your mouth.
- Brush it gently with a toothbrush and toothpaste after removing it.
- Occasionally wash the guard with cool, soapy water and rinse well.
- Check your guard for signs of wear. Show it to your dentist at each checkup. Mouthguards may wear down and need to be repaired or replaced.

## Protect Your Smile

Managing teeth grinding can help you sleep better at night and feel better during the day. It can also help you protect your smile by keeping your teeth from being damaged.



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# Teeth Grinding

## Protecting Your Teeth



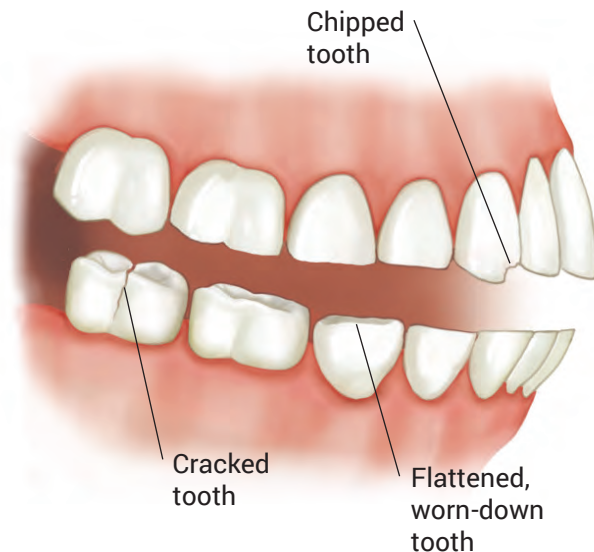
## Do You Grind Your Teeth?

Although teeth grinding (**bruxism**) may happen at any time, people often grind their teeth in their sleep. You may not even know you're doing it. The causes of teeth grinding are not clear. Stress is one possible cause, but often the reason for the habit is not known.

### Damage Caused by Teeth Grinding

- Chipped enamel
- Flattened, grooved, or worn-down teeth
- Loosened teeth
- Cracked teeth
- Periodontal (gum) problems
- Damage to crowns, bridges, or dental implants

If something isn't done to stop the damage, bruxism may lead to jaw muscle or joint problems and even loss of your teeth.



## Assessing the Problem

Your dentist will examine your entire mouth and ask several questions. This evaluation helps confirm that you do grind your teeth. It may also help identify possible reasons for your teeth grinding habit.



### The Symptoms of Grinding

Symptoms like these may be a signal that you grind your teeth:

- A sore, tired jaw
- Sensitive teeth
- Loose teeth
- Earaches
- Dull headaches
- Neck aches
- Clicking sounds when you open your mouth

## Possible Treatments

Depending on the cause of your teeth grinding, your dentist may suggest one or more of these treatments:

### Mouthguards

A mouthguard fits over your teeth. It protects them from grinding damage. It's worn when you're most likely to grind your teeth.



### Bite Adjustment

The way your top teeth fit against your bottom teeth may be uneven. Correcting this may reduce the risk of damage caused by grinding.



### Stress Reduction

Reducing stress may make grinding less likely by relaxing your jaw muscles. Your dentist may suggest ways to reduce stress, like exercise.

### Medication

In some cases medication may be given. It may help relieve sore muscles or reduce stress.



### Repairing Damaged Teeth

Crowns and partial crowns (onlays) are two possible ways to repair teeth damaged by bruxism. Talk to your dentist to learn more about possible treatments.